

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION OF HOPPER DREDGES

IN THE FREEPORT HARBOR CHANNEL PROJECT

SEPTEMBER 1999 – JANUARY 2000

On September 30, 1999 contract hopper dredges began work on the Entrance and Jetty Channels of the Freeport Harbor Project. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 1,000,000 cubic yards (CY) of shoal material. The required depth of dredging was 49 feet below Mean Low Tide (MLT, Corps of Engineers Datum), with 2 feet of allowable overdepth dredging along the Entrance Channel and 47 feet MLT with 2 feet of overdepth along the Jetty Channel.

Dredging began on September 30, 1999, and was completed on January 10, 2000. Two dredges were employed under this contract, they were the *Mermentau* and the *B.E. Lindholm*. The *Mermentau* worked from September 30, 1999 until November 28, 1999 dredging 1,105 loads. The *B.E. Lindholm* worked from November 29, 1999 until January 10, 2000, and dredged 650 loads of material. A total of 1,755 loads of dredged material were collected and deposited into Placement Area No. 1-A. Dredging was performed between Stations 50+00 along the Jetty Channel and -90+00 along the Entrance Channel. A total of 1,555,615 CY of material were excavated from this project.

The dredges were equipped with rigid draghead turtle deflectors, and 100% inflow screening with a 4-inch square mesh. NMFS-approved turtle observers provided 24-hour/day monitoring of dragheads and screens for each load cycle. The observers were employed by Coastwise Consulting under a subcontract to the dredging contractor, Weeks Marine, Inc

During the performance of this dredging, no lethal turtle takes were experienced. There were, however, several occasions when loggerhead and green sea turtles were observed swimming in the vicinity of the dredge. The water temperature ranged from 12°C - 27°C throughout the duration of this dredging. A copy of the daily and weekly observer reports is enclosed.